



mink

Mustela vison

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora
Family: Mustelidae

Features

The adult mink is 20 to 27 inches long, including a seven- to 10-inch tail. The body is red-brown with the belly being a little lighter than the back. The fluffy tail is progressively darker toward the tip, so that the last one-half to one-third is all black. It has small ears. The toes have webbing at the bases.

Natural History

The one basic requirement for mink habitat is permanent water. It eats birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, fish, muskrats, mice, cottontails, crayfish, and voles. It is active mainly at night (nocturnal). It may take over the house or bank burrow of a muskrat to use as its own shelter or live under a stump or in a brush pile. It moves equally well in water and on land. Mating occurs from January through April. Most young are born in April and May. The gestation period is variable and determined by when the fertilized eggs implant and begin development in the uterus. Litter size is usually three to six. Young are born helpless but are able to live on their own at an age of two months.

Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; bottomland forests; interior rivers and streams; wet prairies and fens; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.